

Does your student have a full coping skills tool kit?

We can teach our students about stress management, but the **copied skills that each of us build over a lifetime take constant practice.** That's where you come in.

Below is one of the social-emotional skills lesson we have conducted at Newport (March 2020). Help your student practice and refine these skills through discussion and practice at home.

Here's a recap of what our students learned:

- First, we helped them **assess where their stress comes from.** We also talked about how common stress is to all of us.

In fact, stress is a natural part of anything we care about. Even those things that bring us great joy (such as family and friends) can also become a source of stress as the natural elements of life and loss occur.

Understanding where stress enters our lives helps students learn to manage it. The inventory sheet (below) we used is attached.

Stress Assessment – Acknowledging Our Stress

This activity helps identify the things that tend to stress you out. Place a check next to the words or situations that apply to you. If you prefer not to check a box, you can keep track in your mind.

Event or Situation	Low (rarely experienced)	Medium (sometimes experienced)	High (regularly experienced)
Family (parents are divorcing/separating, parental conflict, sibling conflict, etc.)			
School/Academics (tests, grades, teacher conflicts, having different learning styles than peers, peer comparisons, post-grad plans, etc.)			
Friendships (friendship conflicts, betrayals, gossip, loss of friendship, friends asking you to keep secrets, competition, jealousy, etc.)			
Body Image (concerns with weight, height, hair, blemishes, etc.)			
Sense of Belonging (feeling excluded due to race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, language, socioeconomic status, etc.)			
Relationships (relationships have ended, recent breakup, complicated relationships, relationship conflicts, etc.)			
Bullying and/or Cyberbullying (people are repeatedly humiliating you in front of others, you're the target of harmful comments or photos, etc.)			
Peer Pressure (people regularly pressuring you to use drugs, alcohol, vape, have sex, or take other harmful risks, etc.)			
Money or Resources (your family doesn't have enough money to buy school supplies, clothes, other essential items to attending school activities, etc.)			
Change (moving to a different house, having a new sibling, new job, parent remarriage, etc.)			
Loss (lost a parent, close family member, close friend or pet, etc.)			
Other (add your own):			

This list doesn't contain every possible situation or event that causes stress. These are just typical examples. Stress can build over time. Events or situations that happened two or more years ago could still be causing stress for you. Feel free to add your own in the "Other" box.

What are some negative ways people cope with stress? Discuss.

- Second, we asked our students to think about their **current coping strategies**. As you can see on the attached Coping Skills reference sheet, all strategies have **pros and cons**. It's important that our students **recognize the proper time** to use a technique and **the downside of their favorite tools** so that they use them to best effect.
- Last, we asked them to circle on the attached list below the **tools they use**. Then we had the students fold the sheet into three columns and then in half lengthwise. That gave them the six lists noted below.

<p>Physical</p> <p>Eat regularly</p> <p>Eat healthy</p> <p>Exercise</p> <p>Get regular medical care prevention</p> <p>Get medical care when needed</p> <p>Take time off when sick</p> <p>Get massages</p> <p>Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, do some other physical activity</p> <p>Seek out hug or other form of physical connection when you need it</p> <p>Get enough sleep</p> <p>Wear clothes that make me feel good</p> <p>Take vacations</p> <p>Take physical precautions (i.e. seat belts, helmets, condoms)</p> <p>Moderate caffeine intake</p> <p>Take day trips/mini vacations</p> <p>Make time away from phone/email/internet</p> <p>Make time for self-reflection</p> <p>Take time to acknowledge how I think/feel</p> <p>See a counselor/therapist</p> <p>Write in a journal</p> <p>Read books unrelated to school</p> <p>Try new things/activities</p> <p>Sometimes say no to extra responsibilities</p> <p>Regularly check-in on stress level and assess where you could reduce</p> <p>Engage my intelligence in a new area (i.e. go to an art show, event, theatre)</p> <p>Be curious</p> <p>Allow myself to do things that I'm inexperienced or imperfect at</p> <p>Take appropriate medication if prescribed</p> <p>Psychological</p>	<p>Emotional</p> <p>Spend time with others whose company I enjoy</p> <p>Stay in contact with important people in my life</p> <p>Give myself affirmations or praise</p> <p>Love myself</p> <p>Re-read favorite books or re-view favorite movies</p> <p>Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places and seek them out</p> <p>Allow myself to cry</p> <p>Find things that make me laugh</p> <p>Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests</p> <p>Show gratitude or say thank you</p> <p>Regular reflect on something positive that happened that day</p> <p>Set achievable short and long-term goals</p> <p>Make time for reflection</p> <p>Spend time in nature</p> <p>Find a spiritual connection or community</p> <p>Be open to inspiration</p> <p>Cherish my optimism and hope</p> <p>Be aware of non-material aspects of life</p> <p>Try at times not to be at charge or the expert</p> <p>Be open to not knowing</p> <p>Identify what is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life</p> <p>Meditate</p> <p>Pray</p> <p>Sing</p> <p>Have an experience of awe</p> <p>Contribute to causes in which I believe</p> <p>Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks or music</p> <p>Spiritual</p>	<p>Relationships</p> <p>Schedule regular dates with my partner (if relevant)</p> <p>Schedule regular activities with my parents</p> <p>Make time to see friends</p> <p>Call, check on, or see my relatives</p> <p>Spend time with my pets</p> <p>Stay in contact with far away friends</p> <p>Make time to reply to personal emails, letters, texts, DM, or send Holiday cards</p> <p>Allow others to do things for me</p> <p>Enlarge my social circle</p> <p>Ask for help when I need it</p> <p>Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust</p> <p>Take a real break during lunch (not doing homework)</p> <p>Take time to chat with classmates</p> <p>Turn off distractions to complete tasks</p> <p>Identify projects and tasks that are exciting and rewarding</p> <p>Set limits with peers during group work or shared assignments</p> <p>Maintain academic honesty so I feel good about myself</p> <p>Take a balanced schedule so no one day is too much</p> <p>Arrange work space so it is comforting</p> <p>Seek out academic help when needed (tutorial)</p> <p>Advocate for myself with my teachers</p> <p>Have a peer support/study group</p> <p>Strive for balance between school and relationships</p> <p>Strive for balance between work and fun</p> <p>School</p>
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Now that the students have this information, here's how you can help:

Ideally (and over time) **each student should have at least a couple techniques from each of these six sectors**. If they select from that range, they should also notice that they have the **three types of tools below**.

If not, help them expand their toolkit.

From the six sectors, students should have at least a couple coping skills that work in these situations:

- **Distraction or decompression** help when stress overwhelms them. We all need to be able to take a break while our chemical and physical response to stress processes through our bodies (20-30 minutes).
- **Tools to focus on the challenge at hand** help students tune their attention to the problem-solving, performance, or challenge before them. Help your student learn that stress is not to be feared or controlled. Healthy stress helps our bodies ramp up physically and mentally to meet challenges with responses like increased blood flow.
- **Long-term resilience comes from coping skills that help us nurture our mental health, knowledge, and support networks**. If we want our students to rise confidently to challenges, they must work between these occasions to exercise their ability to cope confidently.

Stress Assessment – Acknowledging Our Stress

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Event or Situation	Low (rarely experience)	Medium (sometimes experience)	High (regularly experience)
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School/Academics (tests, grades, teacher conflicts, having a different learning style than peers, peer comparisons, post-grad plans, etc.)			
Friendships (friendship conflicts, betrayals, gossip, loss of friendships, friends asking you to keep secrets, competition, loneliness, etc.)			
Body Image (concern with weight, height, hair, blemishes, etc.)			
Sense of Belonging (feeling othered due to race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, language, socioeconomics, etc.)			
Romantic Relationships (new relationship, recent breakup, complicated relationship, relationship conflicts, etc.)			
Bullying and/or Cyberbullying (people are repeatedly humiliating you in front of others, you're the target of hurtful comments or photos, etc.)			
Peer Pressure (people regularly pressuring you to use drugs, alcohol, vape, have sex, or take other harmful risks, etc.)			
Money or Resources (you/family don't have enough money to buy school supplies/clothes/other, financial barriers to attending school activities/clubs/etc.)			
Change (moving to a different house/school/city, new sibling was just born, parent remarries, etc.)			
Loss (lost a parent, close family member, close friend or pet, etc.)			
Other (add your own):			

This list doesn't contain every possible situation or event that causes stress. These are just typical examples. Stress can build over time. Events or situations that happened two or more years ago could still be causing stress for you. Feel free to add your own in the "Other" box.

What are some negative ways people cope with stress? Discuss.

Coping Skills

Coping skills help us get through difficult times - they can give us an important break from mental and emotional distress, and sometimes they are literally life-saving.

Keep this list of coping skills handy for when you need it... folded up in your wallet or bag or post it up on the wall somewhere handy at home.

Make this list work for you

Use a highlighter pen to mark the skills that work best for you & add your own ideas over the page.

Distraction

Absorb your mind in something else

Conversation, listen to talk radio, read, do puzzles, TV, computer games, jigsaws, solve a problem, make a list, learn something new, cleaning & tidying, gardening, arts & crafts.

Pros

Gives your heart & mind a break.
Great for short term relief.
Great to get through a crisis.

Cons

Can't do it for too long.
Doesn't resolve any underlying issues. Meds can make it hard to concentrate.

Grounding

Get out of your head & into your body & the world

Use body & senses: smell fragrances, slowly taste food, notice the colours around you. Walk on the grass barefoot, squeeze clay or mud, do yoga, meditate, exercise.

Pros

Helps slow or stop 'dissociation' (feeling numb, floaty or disconnected).
Reduces physicality of anxiety.

Cons

Sometimes it's better to stay a bit dissociated (that's how your mind protects you).

Emotional Release

Let it out!

Yell, scream, run! Try a cold shower. Let yourself cry. Put on a funny video and laugh. Try boxing, cranking up music, or dancing!

Pros

Great for anger and fear.
Releases the pressure of overwhelming emotion.

Cons

It might feel unnatural or you might feel odd at first.

Self Love

Massage hands with nice cream, manicure your nails, cook a special meal, clean your house (or just make your bed), bubble bath or long shower, brush hair, buy a small treat.

Pros

Become your own best friend, your own support worker.
Great for guilt or shame.
You deserve it!

Cons

Sometimes can feel really hard to do, or feel superficial (but it's not).

Thought challenge

Write down negative thoughts then list all the reasons they may not be true. Imagine someone you love had these thoughts - what advice would you give them?

Pros

Can help to shift long-term, negative thinking habits.
Trying to be more logical can help reduce extreme emotion.

Cons

The more emotional you feel, the harder this is to do. In particular, feelings of shame can make this very hard.

Access your higher self

Help someone else, smile at strangers (see how many smiles you get back), pray, volunteer, do randomly kind things for others, pat dogs at the local park, join a cause

Pros

Reminds us that everyone has value and that purpose can be found in small as well as large things.

Cons

Don't get stuck trying to save everyone else and forget about you!

Your Personal Coping Skills List

Use this page to write your own list of coping skills. You might take some from my list, some that you already know, and others may still be out there for you to discover...

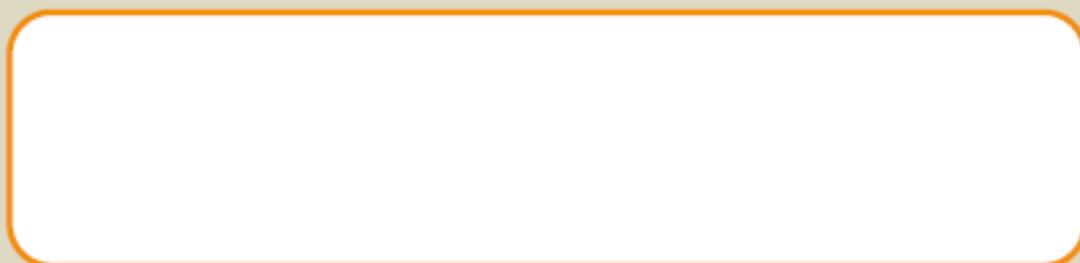
Distraction

Absorb your mind in something else



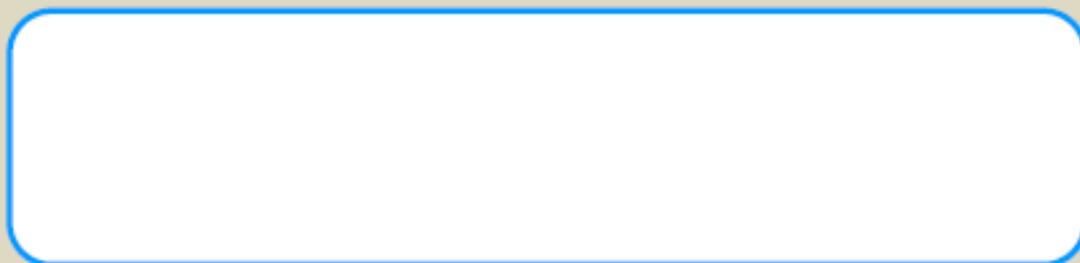
Grounding

Get out of your head & into your body



Emotional Release

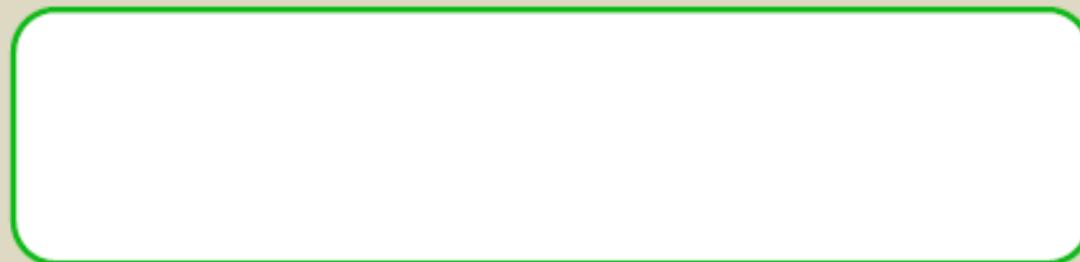
Let it out!



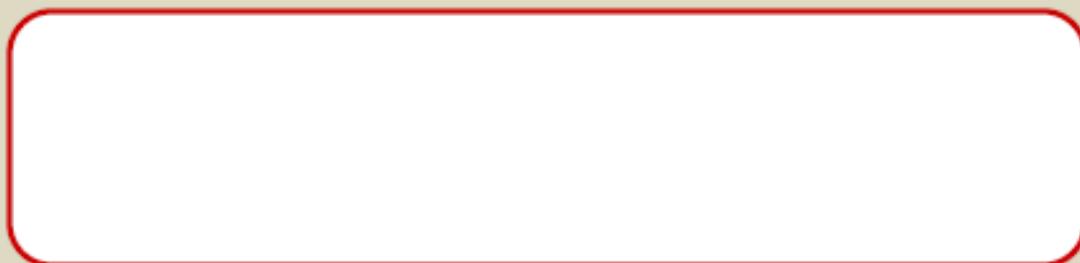
Self Love



Thought challenge



Access your higher self



Physical

Eat regularly
Eat healthy
Exercise
Get regular medical care prevention
Get medical care when needed
Take time off when sick
Get massages
Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, do some other physical activity
Seek out hug or other form of physical connection when you need it
Get enough sleep
Wear clothes that make me feel good
Take vacations
Take physical precautions (i.e. seat belts, helmets, condoms)
Moderate caffeine intake
Take day trips/mini vacations
Make time away from phone/email/internet
Make time for self-reflection
Take time to acknowledge how I think/feel
See a counselor/therapist
Write in a journal
Read books unrelated to school
Try new things/activities
Sometimes say no to extra responsibilities
Regularly check-in on stress level and assess where you could reduce
Engage my intelligence in a new area (i.e. go to an art show, event, theatre)
Be curious
Allow myself to do things that I'm inexperienced or imperfect at
Take appropriate medication if prescribed

Psychological

Emotional

Spend time with others whose company I enjoy
Stay in contact with important people in my life
Give myself affirmations or praise
Love myself
Re-read favorite books or re-view favorite movies
Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places and seek them out
Allow myself to cry
Find things that make me laugh
Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests
Show gratitude or say thank you
Regular reflect on something positive that happened that day
Set achievable short and long-term goals
Make time for reflection
Spend time in nature
Find a spiritual connection or community
Be open to inspiration
Cherish my optimism and hope
Be aware of non-material aspects of life
Try at times not to be at charge or the expert
Be open to not knowing
Identify what is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life
Meditate
Pray
Sing
Have an experience of awe
Contribute to causes in which I believe
Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks or music

Spiritual

Relationships

Schedule regular dates with my partner (if relevant)
Schedule regular activities with my parents
Make time to see friends
Call, check on, or see my relatives
Spend time with my pets
Stay in contact with far away friends
Make time to reply to personal emails, letters, texts, DM, or send Holiday cards
Allow others to do things for me
Enlarge my social circle
Ask for help when I need it
Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust
Take a real break during lunch (not doing homework)
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School



NHS RESOURCES

LET'S TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER

If you know someone who is having a hard time remember that you don't have to say much. Sometimes just letting others know you care makes a difference. If you are struggling in any way, or if you know someone who is, remember that you can reach out to friends and/or family members.

You can also access one of the following **NHS Resources**:

On Campus (Make appointment in counseling center)

- NHS Counselors (*Crisis, stress, depression, academic, classes, etc.*)
- NHS School Psychologist (*learning disabilities*)
- YES Behavioral Health Specialist (*mental health and substance abuse*)
- Community Agency (ACRS, YES) Mental Health counselors (*mental health, anxiety, depression, etc.*)
- Graduation Success Coach (*academic, equity - Commons*)
- Family Connection Specialist – (*school supplies and other resources – Student Store*)

NHS Students Groups (these students can help you get support)

- Peer Mediation (*students will help resolve issues with friends*)
- Peer Tutoring (*academic student tutors*)
- ASPEN (*peer educators*)
- Link Crew (*support and connection for 9th graders*)
- ASB Leaders (*school climate, connection and involvement*)
- Teen Reach Club (*a club focused on peer education about mental health*)

After Hours 24/7 Resources:

- 911 – Bellevue Police, Fire and Medics
- Teen Link – open until 10:00pm with after hour numbers provided (866-TEENLINK)
- King County Crisis Line (866-427-4747)
- BSD report a safety concern (text, phone, email) <https://bsd405.org/help/report/>

10th-Grade Health class parents receive a link to this website for the stress, anxiety, and suicide prevention lessons. This site offers reliable information that your family may find useful: <https://sossignsofsuicide.org/parent/>